

A Ladybird 'Achievements' Book



The story of

NEWSPAPERS



The daily newspaper is so much a part of our lives that we seldom stop to consider how many people and how much co-operation and technical skill are necessary to bring us the latest news and comment so promptly.

This book tells of these, and also something of the history of newspapers — the hand-written bulletins used in the days of the Romans, the news-sheets and early newspapers which followed, the struggle to establish them despite a crippling tax, and then the birth and growth of our present national newspapers.

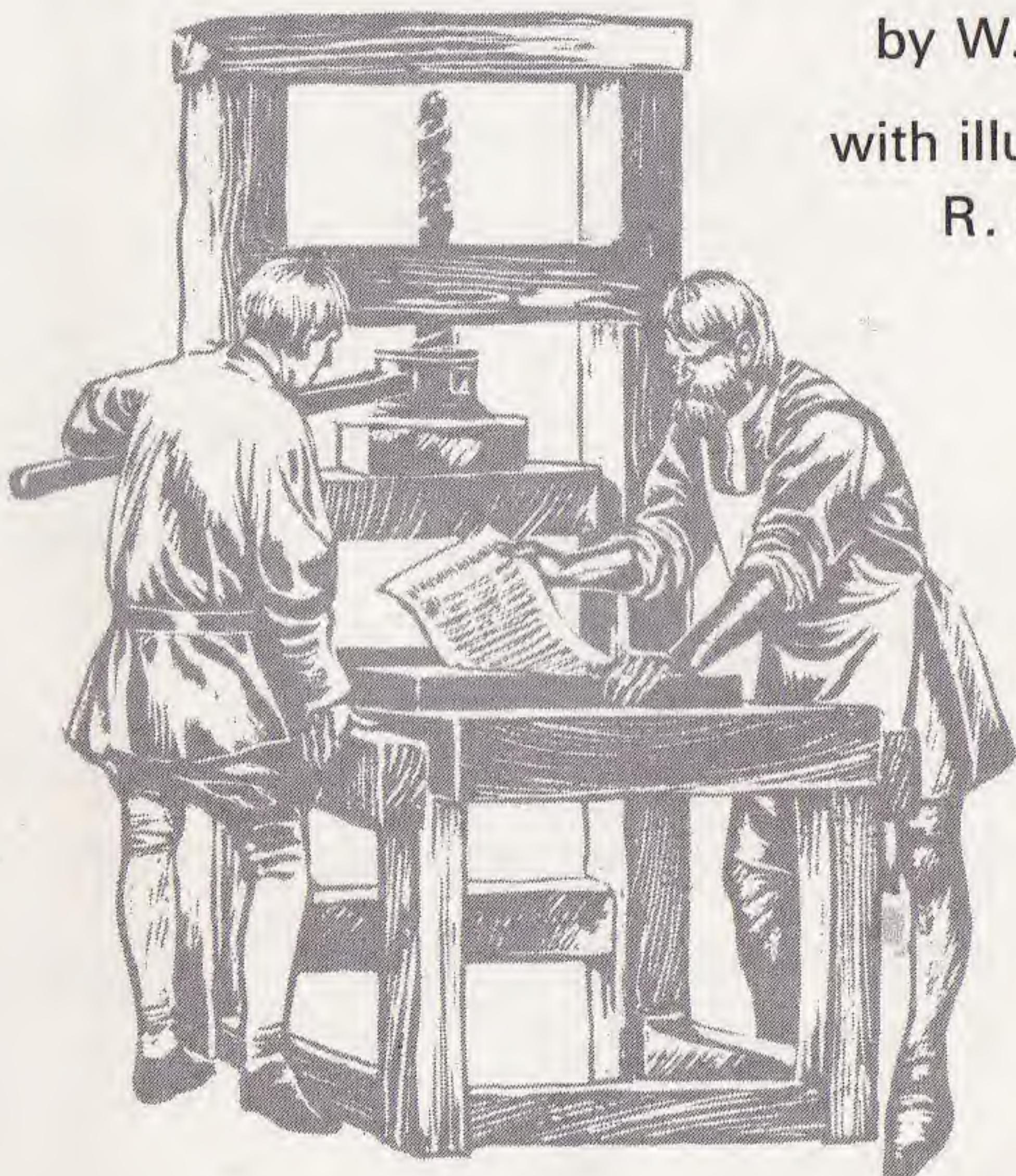


A Ladybird Achievements Book
Series 601

**The story of
NEWSPAPERS**

by W. D. SIDDLE

with illustrations by
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The aims of a newspaper

Every day, including Sundays, millions of people in this country read newspapers. Many of them read two or three different papers. You can see people on their way to work each morning, in the train or on the bus, half hidden behind the pages. Sometimes a person who has no paper tries to read over the shoulder of someone else. Perhaps your father reads his paper at breakfast, before he goes out to work.

A newspaper is a printed publication which is published and sold at regular intervals. Its main purpose is to provide news for its readers. A paper also tries to explain what the news means, so it prints comments and opinions. Its third purpose is to entertain, with photographs, cartoons and other interesting features.

A paper which is published every day is called a 'Daily'. Papers published once a week are called 'Weeklies'. A national paper is one that can be bought easily anywhere in the country.

Newspapers differ from magazines in that they print more news. News is printed on the front page, and a newspaper has no special cover. A newspaper is printed on a special paper called *newsprint*.



Newspapers for everyone

Each person buys the newspaper most suited to his particular interests. A stockbroker in the City is probably more interested in financial news, and has time to read long articles about it. A train driver may be more interested in sport, and prefer short, lively articles. The paper which suits the stockbroker may not be at all suitable for the train driver.

Because of this, different newspapers present their news and features in different ways to suit the types of reader they are trying to attract.

Our national papers fall into two groups. Papers like the 'Daily Express' are called popular papers. They present their news in a bright, lively fashion, with easy-to-read articles and many photographs. Papers like 'The Times' and 'The Daily Telegraph' are called 'heavy' or quality, papers. They emphasise the more serious subjects, and print longer articles about them.

Some newspaper publishers produce Sunday papers with similar titles to the daily papers. These papers, like 'The Sunday Times', are not just Sunday editions of the dailies. They have different editors and different staffs. As people have more time for reading on a Sunday, a Sunday paper has more pages, and contains more articles, than a daily paper.

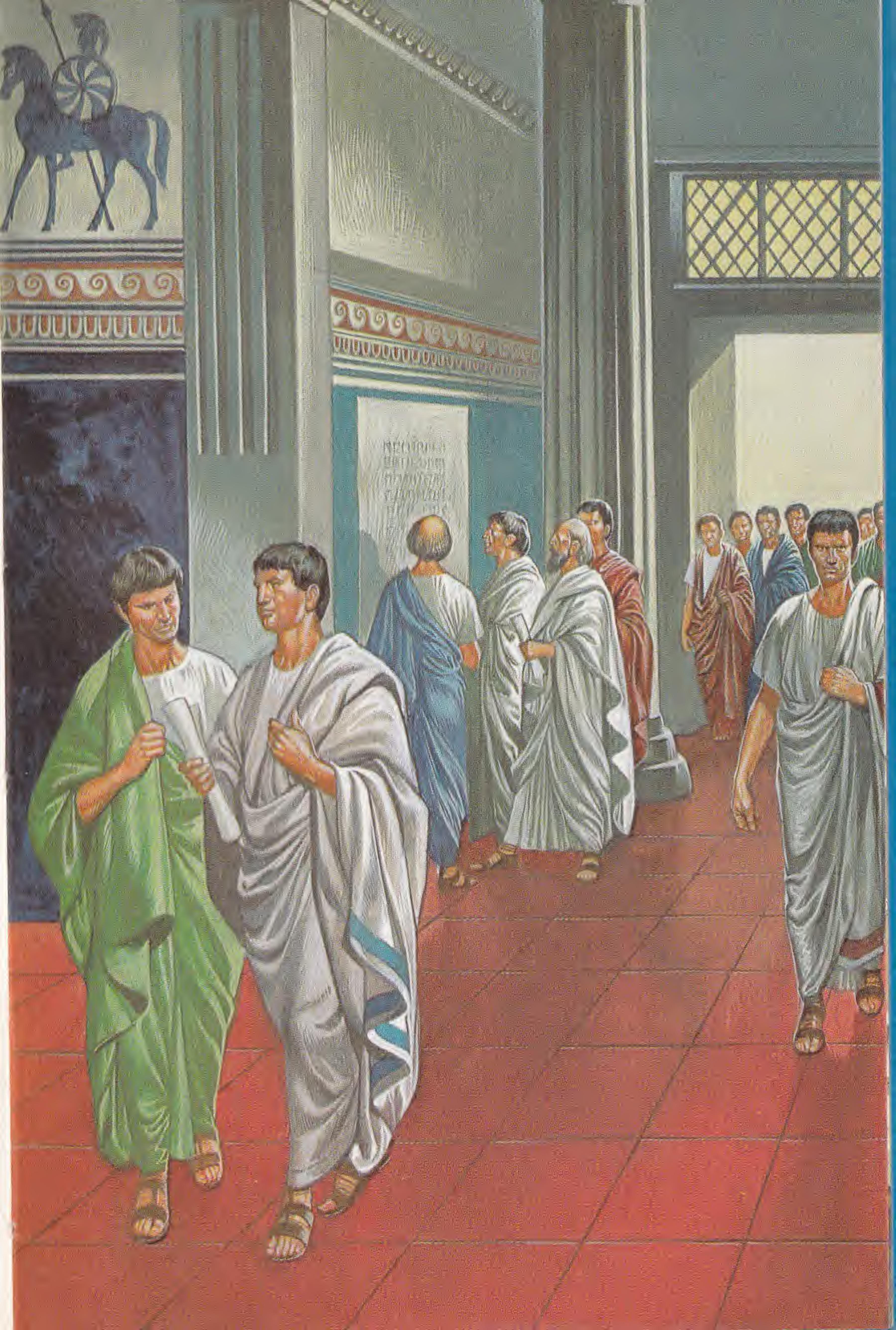


News, notices and bulletins

The oldest British national newspaper is about one hundred and eighty-five years old, but news-sheets of various kinds have been known in different parts of the world for many centuries. The Romans sent news in the form of letters to their distant garrisons of soldiers. There was no printing and no paper as we know it, in those days. Few people could read. The messages were hand-written on some form of parchment, and read aloud at the garrison.

In 60 B.C., Emperor Gaius Julius Caesar started a daily bulletin in the Forum at Rome. The Forum was the meeting place of the Senators who governed the city. The bulletin was fixed at a convenient point where the senators could read the news on their way to and from their discussions.

This method of passing on information is still used today. Notices and bulletins are pinned to notice boards in offices and factories. Schools and colleges run wall newspapers. Typed sheets of news or articles are placed on large notice boards. The entire contents of the board are changed at fixed intervals, in the same way as a new edition of a newspaper is printed daily or weekly.



Early news-sheets

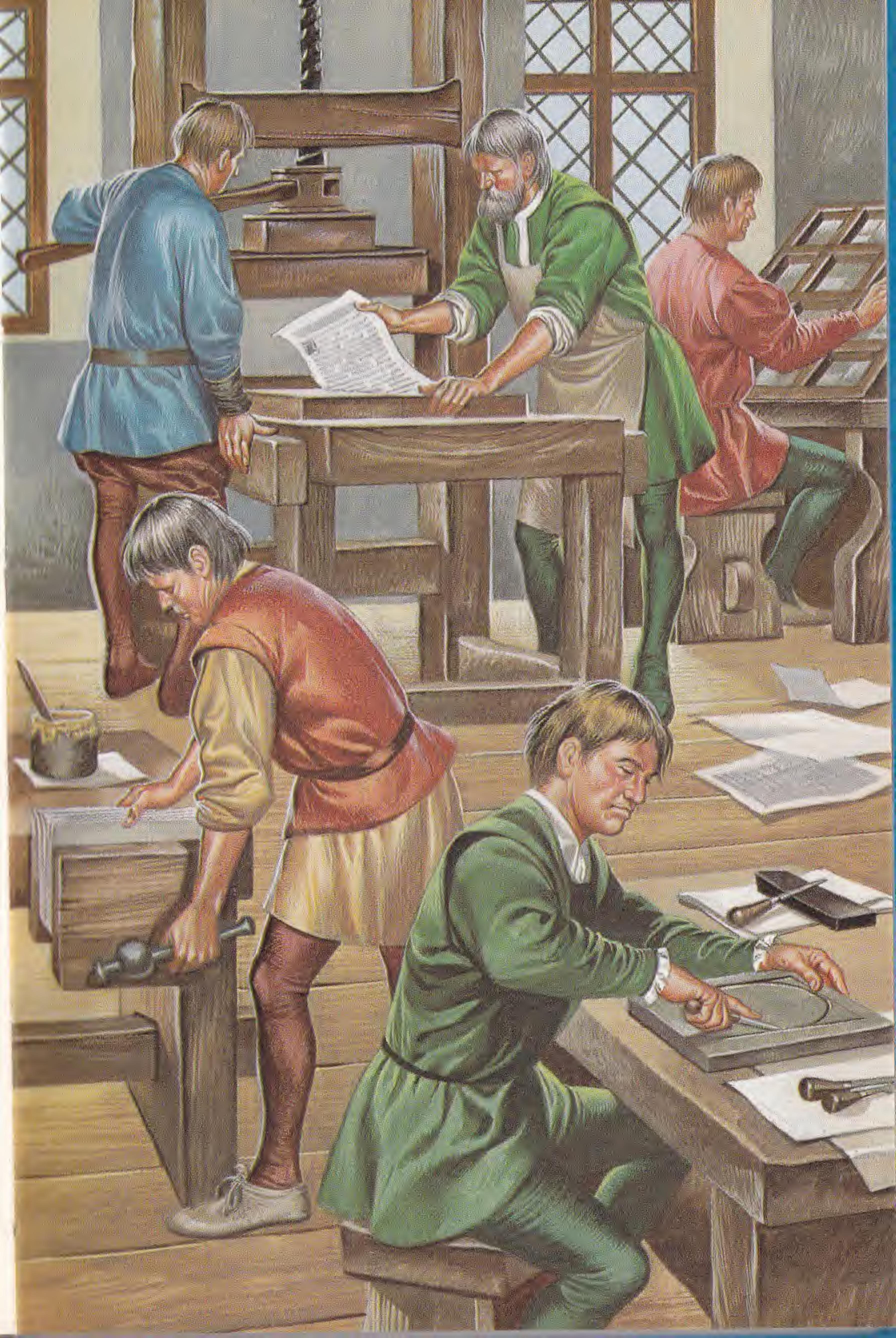
The art of presenting news progressed slowly for hundreds of years after the time of the Romans. Few people were interested in distant events. Communication, even between adjacent villages, was not easy, so those people who were interested had difficulty in finding out news. Messages had to be hand-written, a long, laborious process.

In 1476, Caxton introduced the printing press into England. This had no great immediate effect as far as news-sheets were concerned, but the fact that sheets could be produced more rapidly and easily eventually led to newspapers.

In the 16th century, the commonest form of news-sheet was a leaflet, consisting of a single sheet printed on one side only. Leaflets were sold in markets and country fairs on the Continent, and English translations appeared in this country. The leaflets were published only when there was news of wars, battles or disasters. No-one had yet thought of issuing bulletins regularly.

Then, in 1621, a series of *news budgets* or *corantes* appeared for the first time in England. They had the general theme of 'news from abroad'. Six were published, at roughly weekly intervals, so this series has some claim to be called the first English newspaper.

**Printing replaces the handwriting
of early books and news-sheets**



A first newspaper

The first English publication to contain domestic news appeared in 1641. It was called 'Diurnal Occurrences', ('diurnal means 'daily') and it was concerned mainly with the activities of Parliament. This was just before the start of the Civil War, in 1642, between the Royalists and Parliament (the Cavaliers and Roundheads). In 1643, a 'diurnal' supporting the Royalists commenced publication.

In 1665, the first number of a twice-weekly paper, 'The Oxford Gazette', was published. A few months later the name was changed to 'The London Gazette'. This paper appeared on Tuesdays and Fridays, and was the official paper of the Government.

'The London Gazette' is published on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays as the official paper of the Government of the day. It is not a newspaper as we now understand one. It does not contain news, and it does not try to entertain. It consists entirely of official announcements, lists of appointments to public offices, legal notices, and lists of people who have been awarded honours. It is not normally sold to the general public, although it can be purchased. It circulates among people such as bankers, solicitors and Members of Parliament, who have to be well informed of important official or legal announcements.

**A copy of 'Diurnal Occurrences' is
read by a Parliamentary supporter**



The taxing of newspapers

In 1702 'The Daily Courant' was published. This was the first English paper to appear daily with factual news of general interest rather than political comment. It cost one penny.

'The Daily Courant', in common with other journals, became increasingly popular. Only a few well-educated people could read, but they were eager to learn about what was going on in this country and overseas. The Government was not pleased by the trend. Its members thought that if people were too well informed, they might object strongly to Government actions. Public opinion might make legislation more difficult to enact.

In an effort to reduce the mounting sales of papers, and so prevent people from reading them, the Government imposed a tax. In 1712, stamp tax of one penny a sheet was started. This tax made the papers too expensive for many people to buy, and for a time achieved its purpose.

Stamp tax on journals remained in force, and was increased frequently, for about one hundred and fifty years. During this time, the owners and publishers made constant efforts to have the tax abolished. Because the tax was intended to prevent people from reading and from becoming better informed, it was often called 'a tax on knowledge'.

**Parliament debates the Stamp Tax
on the first English daily paper**



Newspapers and coffee-houses

If people could not afford to buy newspapers, some other way had to be found to enable them to read a paper. One obvious way was to arrange for them to see a free copy.

A favourite meeting place for upper-class people and merchants was the coffee-house. They were in the habit already of visiting such places every day to learn the news and discuss it, and could spend a pleasant evening in a coffee-house for a small charge. The coffee houses therefore seemed ideal places to display newspapers, free of charge.

The coffee-house owners were willing, and soon there was keen rivalry to see which owner could provide the most papers. Since there were about five hundred coffee-houses in London, the papers were better read than if there had been no tax.

Despite the tax, a total of over seven million copies of newspapers was sold during the year 1753. Since the tax was apparently ineffective by then, the Government raised it a half-penny in 1756. Sales continued to rise, and by 1767 had reached eleven million copies a year. The tax continued to rise, too, in stages of a half-penny, and by 1815 the tax had reached fourpence.

**Coffee-house customers read
and discuss the news**



News from Parliament

Stamp tax was not the only restriction imposed on newspapers by successive Governments. Much of the domestic news published was about the proceedings in Parliament, and many M.P.s objected to their speeches and opinions being made public knowledge. In 1738, the House of Commons passed a motion “that it was an indignity to the House, and a breach of privilege, to have reports written and published about Parliamentary business”.

Writers were barred from the House, and so had to be smuggled into the public gallery. To be seen taking notes was to risk forcible ejection. One or two reporters with exceptional memories were able to remember almost everything that was said, and wrote their accounts afterwards.

In 1803, the restrictions were relaxed. Reporters were allowed to occupy seats reserved for them in the Public Gallery. In 1862, reporters were provided with their own gallery, the Press Gallery as it is now called. In 1867, they were granted a Press Room in which to write their reports.

Only accredited Parliamentary correspondents may use the Press Gallery. Use of the Press Gallery is now a recognised part of the procedure for ensuring that papers get all the information they need to report in full the proceedings of Parliament.



The birth of 'The Times'

In 1785, an event occurred that was to prove very significant in the history of newspapers. This was the publication of a new paper called 'The Daily Universal Register'. Three years later, its name was changed to 'The Times', and the paper is still published under this name.

'The Times' is the oldest national paper in Britain. It is considered as almost a national institution and is pre-eminent among the world's newspapers. It has reached this position by establishing, over the years, a reputation for accurate, unbiased reporting of news, and for thoughtful, unsensational comments. It is world-renowned for its excellent news services, particularly of foreign news.

In its early years, 'The Times' was a rebellious newspaper. Papers did not have the same freedom to express their opinions as they have now. The first owner, John Walter, fiercely criticised the Government, and served several short sentences in Newgate Gaol as a result. In the nineteenth century, a continuation of this policy of fierce criticism earned the paper the nickname of *The Thunderer*.

'The Times' today is read by leaders of opinion and other influential people. It has a greater influence than some newspapers with an even bigger circulation, and appeals to an increasingly wide section of the public.

**John Walter, the first owner of 'The Times',
imprisoned for criticising the Government**



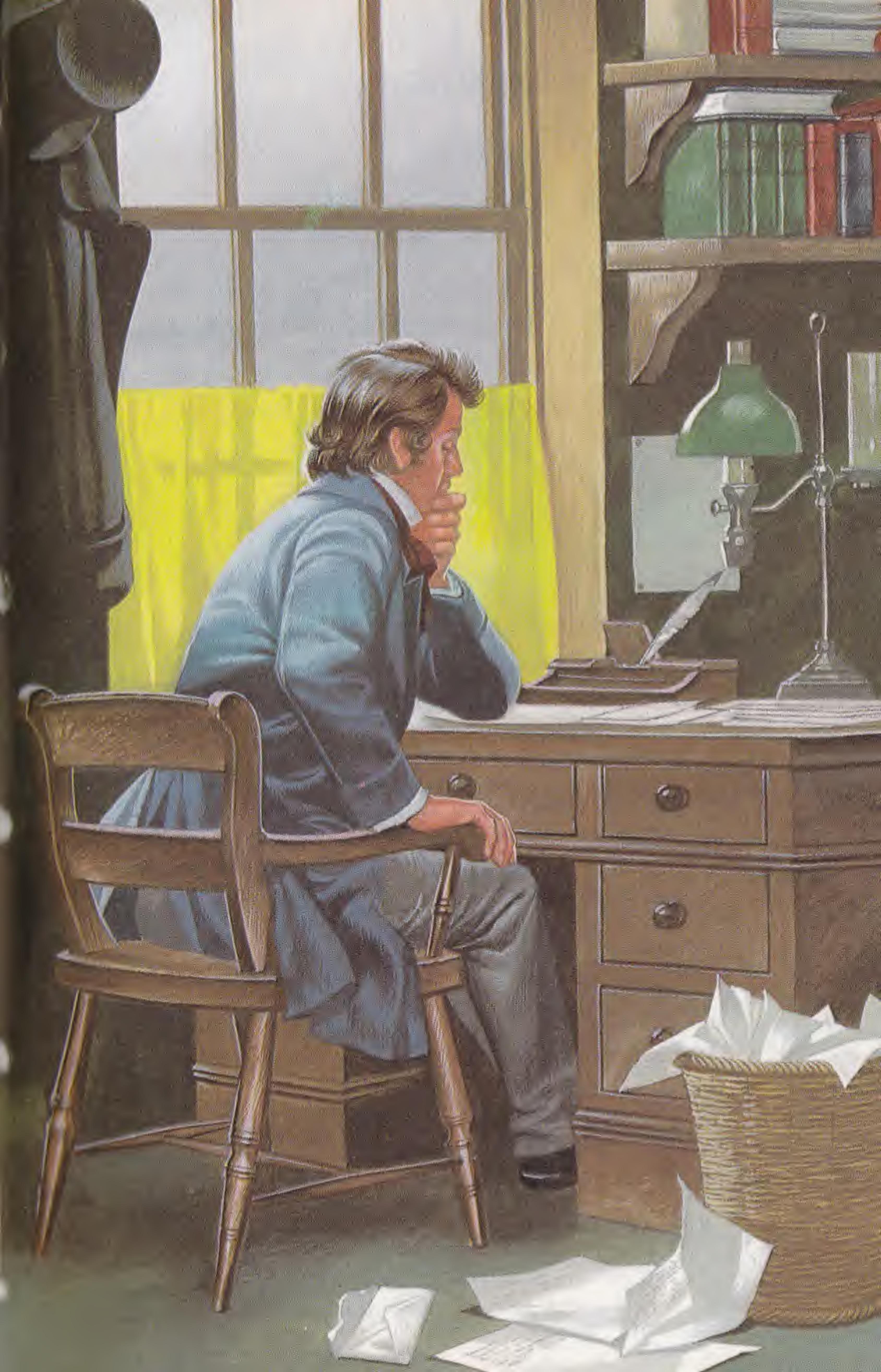
More and more newspapers

Eventually, in 1855, the Stamp Tax was abolished. The way was now open for establishing new papers, and their number increased rapidly. At the same time, more people could afford to buy papers, so the circulation (the number of copies) of the existing papers also increased rapidly.

Some of the newer papers proved to be failures, and soon went out of existence. Others were immediately successful.

Among the successful new papers were 'The Daily News', which had been founded in 1846, and 'The Daily Telegraph'. The 'Telegraph' was established in 1855, and soon had the largest circulation achieved up to that time. Charles Dickens, the famous novelist, was the first editor of 'The Daily News'. He did not find newspaper work to his liking, and soon gave up the position.

Another great paper to be established in this period was 'The Daily Chronicle'. These three papers remained among the most important in the land right into the twentieth century. 'The Daily Telegraph' is still one of our most important papers, but 'The Daily News' and 'The Daily Chronicle' have disappeared. They amalgamated in 1930, to form 'The News Chronicle'. This paper failed in 1960.



The fight for mass circulations

The familiar names of many of the 20th century papers now began to appear. In 1896, the brothers Alfred and Harold Harmsworth, who were great pioneers of newspapers, established the 'Daily Mail' as a popular, half-penny newspaper. The paper introduced many new ideas, and was an instant success. By 1900 it had a circulation of over one million copies every day. By 1929, it had reached two million and, at one time, the paper had the largest circulation of any daily paper in the world.

In 1900, Alfred Pearson founded the 'Daily Express' which, under Lord Beaverbrook, became the great rival to the 'Mail'. Beaverbrook won control of the 'Express' in 1922.

Alfred Harmsworth founded the 'Daily Mirror' in 1903. He tried the novel idea of publishing a paper for gentlewomen, written by gentlewomen. The first issue was a great success but, in a few months, the paper proved a disastrous failure. Gentlewomen were not interested. To rescue the venture, the paper was changed to a popular one. The page size was reduced to half and for the first time in any paper, photographs were given equal prominence with news. The 'Daily Mirror' became the first illustrated, halfpenny, daily newspaper, and was soon firmly established.

**The 'Daily Mirror' founded as a women's paper,
becomes a popular daily**



The popular papers and the 'press barons'

A feature of the period from about 1900 to the beginning of the Second World War, in 1939, was the dominance exerted over the popular papers by their proprietors. Today, the owner, or Board of Directors, usually decides what the broad policy of the paper is to be, and leaves it to the editor to see that the details of the policy are carried out. The early editors had much less freedom. The proprietor dictated the policy, controlled the finances to a very great extent, and took a great personal interest in the actual contents. The paper was often used to express the personal opinions of its owner, who was thus able to influence millions of people.

Many of the proprietors of important popular papers received titles, and became known as 'press barons'. Among the most famous of these were Lord Northcliffe (Alfred Harmsworth), Lord Rothermere (Harold Harmsworth) and Lord Beaverbrook.

Not everyone agreed that the press barons should be able to wield such influence through their newspapers. However, their policies made their papers readable and popular, and very successful. They advanced the history of papers considerably.

**Lord Northcliffe—one of the press barons
who built up mass circulation**



Meeting the costs of a newspaper

Like any other commercial enterprise, a modern newspaper must operate at a profit if it is to continue in business. A paper has two main sources of revenue. One is the money received by selling the paper: the greater the circulation, the greater the revenue from sales. The other is the money received from advertisers who pay for space in which to publish their advertisements.

Advertisements are very important to newspapers of all kinds. More than sixty per cent of the revenue of a newspaper comes from advertising. If a paper selling at sixpence a copy loses one thousand pounds worth of advertising, it has to increase its circulation by over forty thousand to make up the loss. Since the publishers get only part of each sixpence (because the distributors need something to cover their costs), the increase in circulation may have to be much greater than forty thousand.

To some extent, advertising revenue depends on the circulation of the paper, and the different types of people who read it. An advertiser wants as many of the right kind of people as possible to see his advertisement. He will wish to advertise in the papers which are bought by the largest possible number of the people he seeks to attract.



Failures and new ventures

As we have seen, different newspapers appeal to different types of reader. A popular paper appeals to the majority of people, while a quality paper appeals to a more specialised type of reader. Whatever the kind of paper, it is in competition with all the others to increase its circulation and advertising revenue. This has been the situation throughout the life of most of our national papers, and this competition has been the cause of the failure of many papers in the past. Competition forced the amalgamation in 1930 of the 'Daily News' and the 'Daily Chronicle', to produce 'The News Chronicle'.

Papers now have to compete for advertisements with commercial television and they have lost a considerable amount of advertising revenue as a result. Since the cost of producing newspapers is continually rising, the task of operating them profitably becomes harder. In some cases it has proved impossible. 'The News Chronicle' failed in 1960, and another great paper of the pre-war era, 'The Daily Herald', ceased publication in 1964.

Although it is difficult to operate newspapers profitably, new ventures are still undertaken. Among them are 'The Sun', and 'The Sunday Telegraph', the first new Sunday paper for forty years.



Gathering the news

Before a newspaper can be printed it has to have some news to print. All newspapers have highly efficient news-gathering methods. They employ their own reporters and correspondents to supply news of events at home and abroad. Many of them work overseas, and telephone despatches at regular intervals.

The news may come from an eye-witness account, such as a report of a conference from a reporter who was attending it. It may come from a Press release, that is, an announcement made by trade, industry or Government.

It would be impossible for a paper to cover every event, so it makes use of news agencies. These are organisations that employ reporters and correspondents in the same way as a newspaper. These reporters send their news to a central office. The news is typed out on an electric typewriter in the central office. The message is reproduced simultaneously on electric typewriters in the offices of every newspaper subscribing to that agency.

You will often see the words *Reuter* or *Press Association* at the end of a newspaper account of an event. This means that the paper has used the account supplied by the named agency.

A war correspondent collecting news on his portable tape recorder for later reference



The editor and his staff

The editor is responsible for the whole newspaper, its contents, appearance, and general policy. His staff may include a news editor, a features editor, an art editor, a sports editor, and an advertisement manager to help him. Some papers have a woman's editor.

The news editor deals with the news. He supervises reporters, who collect the news, and sub-editors. Sub-editors assess the importance of the news and prepare the stories for the printer. Their work is very important, for the amount of news that a paper receives every day may be sixty times as much as it has room to print. The sub-editors have to decide what is printed and what is left out. They reduce lengthy news items to the required length.

The editorial department also employs writers of the 'leading' and 'feature' articles. These comment on, and give further background details of, the news items. Sometimes such articles are written by specialists who are not on the staff of the paper.

The writing team is completed by the specialists and the critics. Specialist subjects range from industry to sport. The critics review the arts—music, drama, literature, etc.

The art editor deals with all photographs and illustrations, and the advertising manager handles all matters concerning advertisements.



Sifting the news

The working day in a newspaper office begins with a series of short conferences to decide the broad outlines of the contents of the next day's paper. The news editor presents his ideas at an editorial conference. An art conference decides on photographs. The leader writers are called in to discuss suitable subjects for editorial articles. The advertising manager tells how much space has been booked for advertisements. At the end of the conferences, everyone knows what is required during the day. This will be altered by events, even up to the last minute before printing starts.

News reports flow in and are sub-edited. 'Leaders' are written and re-written. Material is chosen or discarded. Pages are designed with news, features and advertisements, each given their allotted place and prominence to ensure that the paper presents its familiar appearance. Everything must be done carefully and accurately. Everyone must be prepared to change a page if important news comes in at the last minute.

Printing of the first edition must start by a fixed time so that the paper can be despatched in time to reach its most distant destination by the next morning. This time is called the 'deadline'.



Printing the news

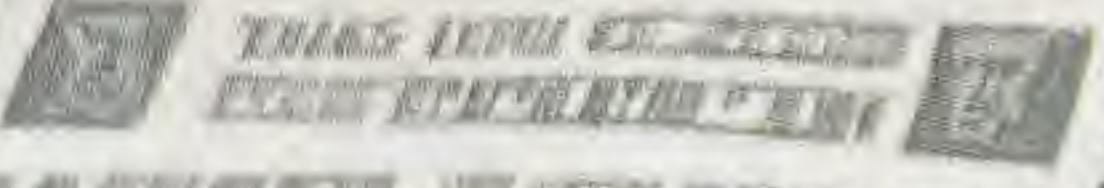
Printing takes place on giant rotary printing presses which can turn out thousands of finished copies of the paper every hour. Starting from a huge roll of paper, the press prints, cuts, gathers together and folds the pages to form the paper. It then stacks them for easy collection.

A special type of paper, called newsprint, is used. It is an absorbent paper on which the ink dries readily and does not smudge during printing.

The material to be printed (the 'copy') has been transferred to a printing plate by a number of technical processes. The printing plate is in the form of a sheet of metal, bent to form half a cylinder. Two of these metal plates are bolted round the roller of the printing press to make a complete cylinder of metal type. The newsprint passes between this cylinder and a smooth one, like washing through a mangle. It then passes between two other cylinders for the printing of the other side.

As the papers are stacked after printing, they are collected in bundles, wrapped, addressed, and despatched to the station by delivery vans, in good time to catch the newspaper trains.

the **Daily — Mail** 

THREE LITTLE PIGS
BEAT BIG BROTHER 
WHEN WILLIE
WENT TO CHICAGO

MONDAY
POSTURE
COLLEGE
ENTERTAINMENT

ROCK AND ROLL
IN THE AIR

PRODDING
THE PUPPETS

THEIR
WORLD



Newspaper distribution

Newspaper trains speed through the night to the major cities and towns. From them, the papers are taken further on by local trains or buses, and are collected by the wholesale newsagent from the point of delivery. The wholesaler delivers them to retail newsagents, who then sort out the papers, marking on them their customers' names or addresses. The newsboy then takes them out for delivery, on a bicycle or on foot, in all weathers.

He is the last link in a chain which may have included almost every means of transport and communication known to us. The reporter may have flown to the scene to get his story. The news may have come to the newspaper office by radio, by teleprinter, or by telephone. Pictures may have been sent by radio or by communications satellite, like 'Early Bird' or 'Telstar'.

Once printed, the paper has been sent by road, rail, and sometimes by sea, to the newsagent. All this, just to make sure that you have a newspaper to read each morning!



Regional editions

Most of the national papers have their headquarters in London, and copies of the paper are printed there. If London were the only centre in which papers were printed, copies would have to be despatched from London very early in the evening to reach northern England and Scotland by next morning. To overcome this, many of the newspapers have editorial offices and printing works in cities like Manchester and Glasgow. These print their own regional editions of the paper. These editions have the advantage that they can be printed later, and so contain later news, yet still be delivered before a paper that has to be sent from London.

These regional editions contain much the same national and international news as the London editions, but they also contain a considerable amount of local news and advertisements. This makes the paper more interesting to the people in the area, and helps to boost circulation.

The regional editions themselves may have news pages devoted to a small area within the region. Copies of an edition sold in Manchester contain news from Lancashire and Cheshire. The same edition sold in Newcastle will have news from Northumberland and Durham in it.



Local papers

Although over fifteen and a half million copies of national newspapers are sold every day, there are fewer than ten national papers. In contrast, hundreds of different local papers are published. Every county has at least one local paper, and many counties have two or three. The larger towns and cities within a county also have their own local papers.

The essential difference between a national paper and a local paper, as far as news is concerned, is that the local paper deals entirely with what is happening in the area in which the paper circulates. It does not try to compete with the national paper on national news.

A local paper is usually a weekly paper, although some are published twice a week. It serves a small area, and describes local matters. It reports such things as meetings of the borough or urban district council, and weddings at local churches. It gives publicity to controversies about education, housing or roads. The performances of the town football or cricket teams fill its sports pages.

The local paper performs a useful function in informing the community about what is happening around it, and is an essential part of the pattern of British newspapers.



Provincial daily papers

Midway between the national and local newspapers are the *provincial* daily papers, which combine a little of both types. Many of our major cities, such as Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle, have their own morning paper. The contents of the paper are similar in character to those of the regional editions of the national papers, but with a much stronger local flavour. Each of the provincial papers circulates widely in its own area, but has little sale outside it.

The evening papers play an important part in the newspaper world. They are published daily. Although called 'evening' papers, the first editions may be on sale as early as 10 a.m. Various editions are published during the day, up to about 6 p.m.

Most cities in the United Kingdom have one evening paper. London has two. Like the provincial dailies, evening papers circulate in a small area, but are widely read in that area.

An evening paper does not have the distribution problems of a national paper, and can print the news on the same day as it happens. If the news is sufficiently important, a special edition can be on sale within an hour of the news being received.



The Street of Ink

Fleet Street is regarded everywhere as the centre of the British newspaper world. A reporter working for a national paper works in 'Fleet Street'. It is the ambition of nearly all reporters to work in Fleet Street. News about the newspaper industry is news from Fleet Street.

Fleet Street itself is a rather undistinguished thoroughfare of shops and offices, traffic and noise, in London. It runs east and west, from the Strand and Temple Bar at one end, to Ludgate Circus at the other. Beyond Ludgate Circus is Ludgate Hill, at the top of which stands St. Paul's Cathedral. Fleet Street is about half a mile long and slopes gently down to Ludgate Circus.

Surprisingly, only two of our national daily papers have their main offices in Fleet Street itself. The others are situated in the area surrounding the street. You can pass the front door of every national newspaper, on foot, in less than one hour.

Apart from the two national newspaper offices, Fleet Street houses the London offices of many of the provincial dailies and of the principal news agencies.

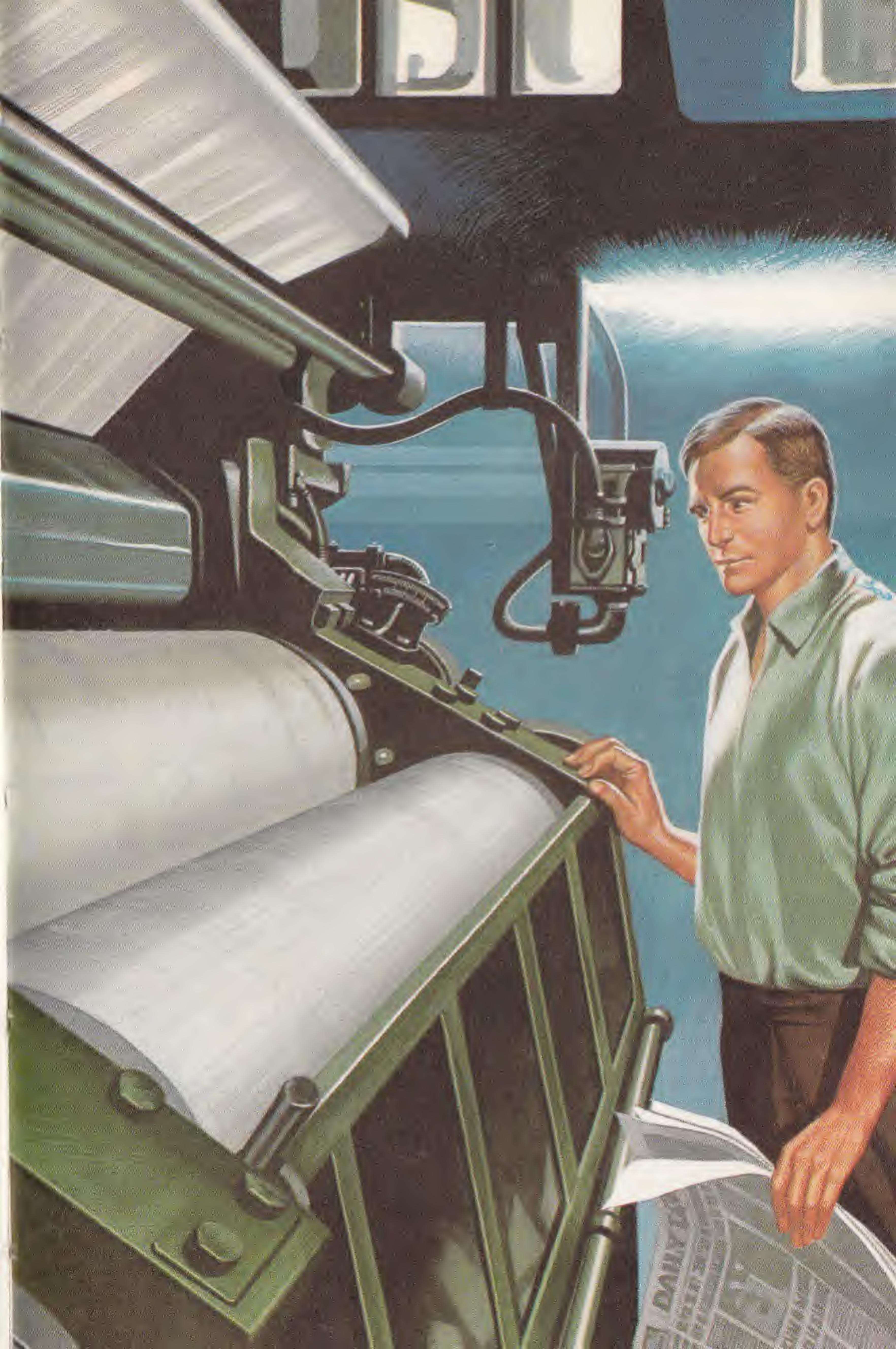
The street is sometimes called the Street of Ink because of its association with newspapers and printing.



The story of newspapers

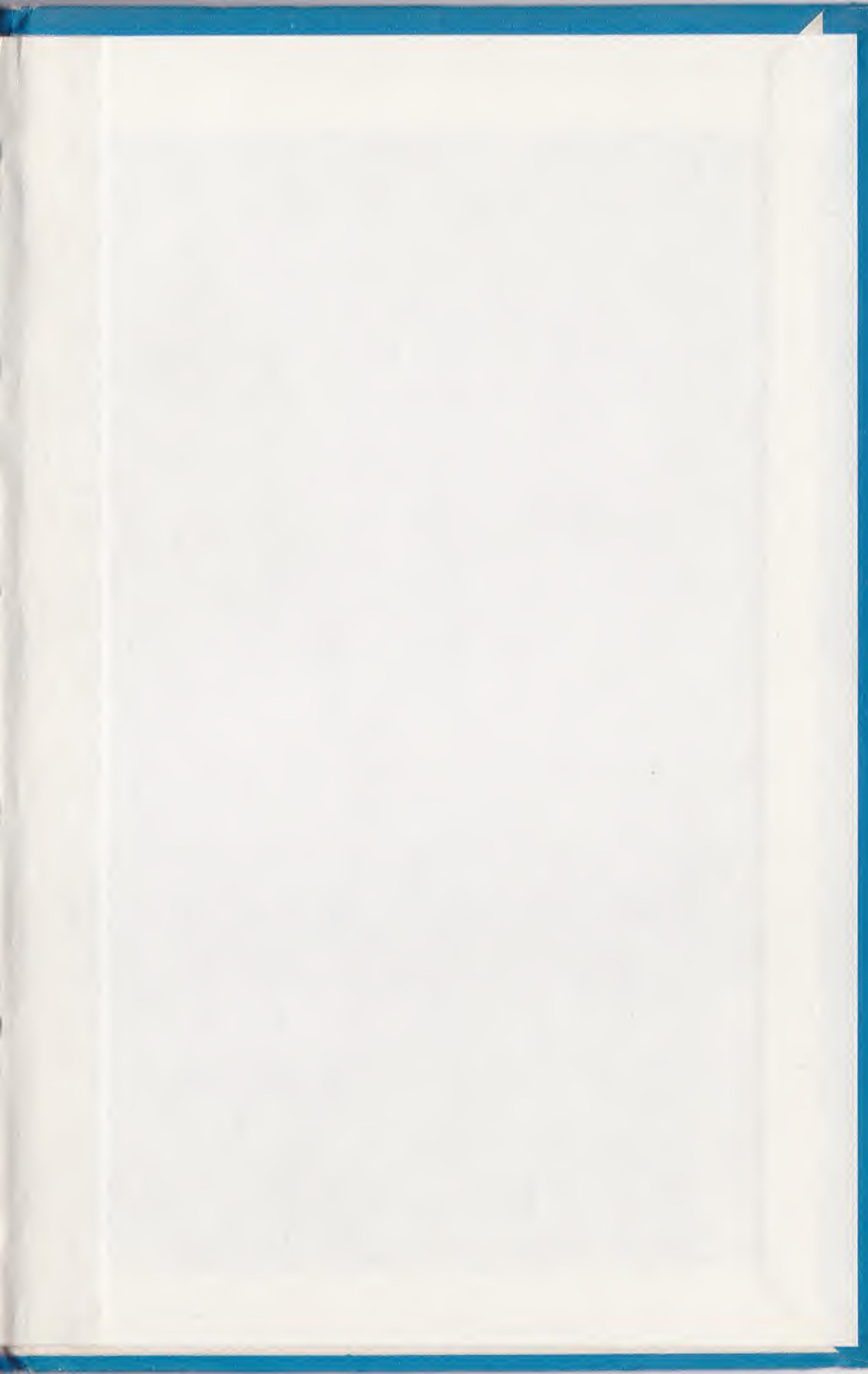
The story of newspapers is one of continuing development and change. From the laboriously produced single sheets of centuries ago, we have progressed to the highly sophisticated daily newspaper of today, with its magazine supplements, separate sections devoted entirely to particular subjects, and occasional full-colour advertisements. Many of these changes have been stimulated by the need to satisfy the readers, and have been made possible by the invention of new machinery and methods of using it.

It is a far cry from the old hand-operated printing press to the modern high speed rotary presses that are standard equipment for printing newspapers all over the world. It is a sign of the continuing development that even these wonderful machines may one day be obsolete. A new method of printing, called web-offset, is gradually being introduced. It is believed to have several advantages over present methods, especially for printing colour. Already many magazines are printed by this method and, soon, the full-colour daily newspaper may be as familiar a sight to us as the black and white one is now.





A Ladybird Achievements Book
Series 601





List of titles in Series 601

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2 <i>Great Inventions</i>	9 <i>Exploring Space</i>
3 <i>The story of Railways</i>	10 <i>Underwater Exploration</i>
4 <i>The story of Ships</i>	11 <i>The story of Oil</i>
5 <i>The story of the Motor Car</i>	12 <i>Lighthouses, Lightships and Lifeboats</i>
6 <i>The story of Houses and Homes</i>	13 <i>The story of Radio</i>
7 <i>The story of Clothes and Costume</i>	14 <i>The story of Newspapers</i>

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